

REMARKS

The Office Action of September 14, 2006 has been reviewed and the Examiner's comments carefully considered. The present Amendment amends claims 9, 13 and 16 in accordance with the originally-filed specification. No new matter has been added. The present amendment also cancels claim 15. Accordingly, claims 9-14 and 16 remain in this application, and claims 9 and 13 are in independent form.

Allowable Subject Matter

Initially, the Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for indicating that the subject matter of claims 15 and 16 define over the prior art of record. Specifically, the Examiner has indicated that claims 15 and 16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including the base claim and any intervening claims.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections

Claims 9 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated or fully taught by United States Patent No. 6,240,235 to Uno et al. (hereinafter "the Uno patent"). In view of the following remarks, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection.

As defined by amended independent claim 9, the present invention is directed to a fiber array for optical communication. The fiber array includes a substrate for inserting optical fibers therein and a press plate for pressing and fixing the inserted optical fibers. The substrate has a plurality of grooves into which the optical fibers are inserted. The accuracy of the center-to-center dimension between the grooves adjacent to each other is within $\pm 0.5 \mu\text{m}$, and the degree of parallelization in the groove length direction between the grooves adjacent to each other is within ± 0.1 degree. The plurality of grooves are formed in the substrate by pulsed laser beam machining followed by etching an inner wall of each of the formed grooves.

The Uno patent is directed to an optical fiber fixing member that includes an optical fiber guide block (82) having eight strings of optical fiber fixing engagement portion (81) for receiving optical fibers (86) therein. The optical fiber fixing engagement portion (81) comprises V-shaped grooves positioned in a parallel relation with each other on the optical fiber guide block (82) (see Figs. 12a and 12b). The Examiner relies on Table 1

Application No. 10/521,952
Paper Dated December 14, 2006
In Reply to USPTO Correspondence of September 14, 2006
Attorney Docket No. 3824-050246

(column 38, lines 34-60) as disclosing that the accuracy of the center-to-center dimension between adjacent grooves is within $\pm 0.5 \mu\text{m}$. The Examiner also contends that EXAMPLE 21 (beginning at column 59, line 43) discloses that the degree of parallelization in the groove length direction between adjacent grooves is within ± 0.1 degree.

The Uno patent, however, does not teach or suggest that the plurality of grooves are formed in the substrate by pulsed laser beam machining followed by etching an inner wall of each of the formed grooves as required by independent claim 9. Furthermore, on page 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner has admitted that the Uno patent and the other prior art of record do not teach or suggest such a feature.

Accordingly, the Applicants believe that the subject matter of amended independent claim 9 is not taught in or suggested by the Uno patent. Reconsideration of the rejection of amended independent claim 9 is respectfully requested.

Claim 10 depends from and adds further limitations to amended independent claim 9 or a subsequent dependent claim and is believed to be patentable for the reasons discussed hereinabove in connection with amended independent claim 9. Reconsideration of the rejection of claim 10 is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claims 11 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) for obviousness over the Uno patent. In view of the following remarks, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection.

Claims 11 and 12 depend from and add further limitations to amended independent claim 9. The Uno patent was discussed hereinabove in connection with amended independent claim 9. Claims 11 and 12 are believed to be patentable for the reasons discussed hereinabove in connection with amended independent claim 9. Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 11 and 12 is respectfully requested.

Claims 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) for obviousness over the Uno patent in view United States Patent No. 6,563,998 to Farah et al. (hereinafter “the Farah patent”). In view of the following remarks, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection.

Application No. 10/521,952
Paper Dated December 14, 2006
In Reply to USPTO Correspondence of September 14, 2006
Attorney Docket No. 3824-050246

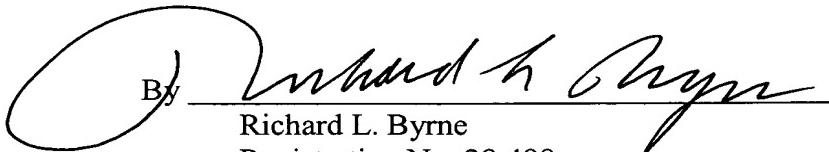
The Examiner indicated that dependent claim 15 contains allowable subject matter as discussed above. Claim 15 depends from claim 13, which depends directly from independent claim 9. Claim 13 has been amended to include the limitations of independent claim 9 and dependent claim 15, such that claim 13 has been rewritten to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, independent claim 13 is now in allowable form.

Claim 14 depends from and adds further limitations to amended independent claim 13 and is believed to be patentable for the reasons discussed hereinabove in connection with amended independent claim 13. Reconsideration of the rejection of claim 14 is respectfully requested.

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of pending claims 9-14 and 16 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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